

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Claiborne County Jail
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Highway 33 at Highway 25E N/A ☐ not for publication
city or town Tazewell N/A ☐ vicinity
stat e Tennessee code TN county Claiborne code 025 zip code 37879

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

- ☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

- ☐ removed from the National
Register.

- ☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Jail

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Gable-Front

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone, Brick

roof Metal

other Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1819-1931

Significant Dates

1819, 1875

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: East Tennessee History Center

Claiborne County Jail
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre Tazewell, Tenn. 154 NE

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 269770 4037004
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andra Kowalczyk, Historic Preservation Planner
organization East Tennessee Development District date September 20, 2006
street & number P.O. Box 249 telephone (865) 273-6003
city or town Alcoa state TN zip code 37701-0249

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Claiborne County Historical Society c/o Bill Lambert
street & number P. O. Box 32 telephone 423.626.8421
city or town Tazewell state TN zip code 37879

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Claiborne County Jail
Claiborne County, Tennessee

VII Physical Description

The Claiborne County Jail is located on Highway 33 near the intersection of Highway 25E in Tazewell (population 2,156), in East Tennessee. The county is bounded on the north by the state of Kentucky, on the east by Hancock County, on the south by Grainger and Union counties, and on the west by Campbell County. The area's topography is characterized by ridges and valleys running from northeast to southwest. Tazewell, centrally located, was selected as the county seat in 1804. Built in 1819 the jail is composed of stone on the first story and brick on the second story. The jail also features metal grating over the window and door openings.

The two-story jail is rectangular in shape, with a front gable roof. The entrance faces west towards the highway. The gable ends of the jail are twenty-six feet across. The sides of the building (north and south) are thirty-two feet long. The first level is constructed of cut limestone rocks and mortar. The walls are eighteen inches thick, with the length of individual stones measuring up to five feet. The roof is covered with metal and a brick chimney rises from the peak on the west half of the building.

The west façade features a central entrance to the building that measures two feet wide and six and one-half feet tall. The door on this entrance is of a grate design, consisting of two-and-one-half inch bands of metal running horizontally and vertically within a metal frame. A rounded bolt head protrudes at each juncture of metal bands. This metal grate is an original feature. The second story of the jail is brick laid in common bond. In the center of the second story is a door-sized opening, enclosed with vertical board shutters. A circular vent opening with a metal "X" grate is located in the peak of the gable.

The north and the south elevations of the jail each have four window openings, two on each floor. Each opening is covered with a framed metal grate matching the front door, and vertical board shutters. Some of the grates are original, and some are (historic) replacements. These openings measure two feet wide and between four and six feet tall. A couple of the shutter boards have become detached and currently lean against the building. Large metal bolts protrude from the brick walls in the back two-thirds of the second story. The east (or back) elevation of the jail is solid stone across the lower level; the brick second level has one window with an original metal grate covering and vertical shutter boards. A circular vent, matching the design of that in the front gable, is located at the top of the east gable. A short, brick chimney rises from the metal roof at approximately one-third of the distance from the front of the jail.

At the jail's entrance, one step leads down into the front portion on the first floor, with a stairway on the south wall. This portion of the building is ten and one-half feet deep, or approximately one-third of the building's depth. The floor of this section is brick, and the walls of this room are of mortared, cut limestone. A door-less opening leads to a larger back room. To the north of this doorway, a fireplace has been removed, but its flue is still intact. The back room historically consisted of a central hall flanked by smaller units to each side. Local historian Mary A. Hansard wrote in 1979 that the jail had "a large stack chimney in the center, with two fireplaces on the lower floor and two on the upper floor. There were two rooms on the first floor. One was used as a kitchen and dining room, and the other as a dungeon in which to confine criminals.

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Claiborne County, Tennessee

A hall divided these rooms.”¹ Though these separate rooms no longer exist, the spatial arrangement remains discernible from rough, concrete floor demarcations. The exact date of the removal of these units is unknown; however, as the jail was functional until 1931, the above arrangement was intact until at least that time. The ceiling consists of the exposed wood and joists of the second floor.

From the entrance section of the jail building, the stairway on the south wall has two ninety-degree turns, leading to the second story. A wall also divides the second floor at approximately one-third of the building’s depth, as below; however, this wall is of brick on the second floor. The west gable wall has a door-sized opening with board shutters. Two restrooms have been installed on the north side of the front room. The partitions are of wood panels with a board-and-batten design. The restrooms were added shortly before the 1982 World’s Fair was held in Knoxville, when the jail was open to the public and housed an exhibit on the history of law enforcement.

Hansard wrote that “[t]here were three apartments on the second floor, all nicely plastered.”² As on ground level, the individual rooms of the second floor have been removed. The back, larger portion of the second floor is open. Local historian Alexander Moore Cloud noted that the jail was built with double walls. “The inside walls were of wood while the outer walls were made of stone.”³ Some of the original interior wood siding remains; vertical slats of wood still hang on the east and west walls of the rear section on the second floor. The metal bolts visible on the exterior, protruding from the north and south elevations, can be seen on the interior walls. These bolts were installed for reinforcement of the jail’s security; as explained by a descendant of Josiah Ramsey, a member of the committee that undertook the building of the jail, the bolts held wood siding to the interior of the brick walls, preventing prisoners from chipping out the mortar. As noted previously, the north and south walls have two windows with original metal grid coverings. The original wood floor remains. The ceiling is open, revealing exposed rafters and the under side of the metal roof.

¹ Mary A. Hansard, *Old Time Tazewell* (Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1979), 48.

² Ibid.

³ Alexander Moore Cloud, “Old Time Tazewell,” in *Reflections, Quarterly Newsletter* (Tazewell, TN: Claiborne County Historical Society, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1986), 12.

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Claiborne County, Tennessee

VIII Statement of Significance

Claiborne County's Jail in Tazewell was established with the founding of the seat of government and represents its citizens' attention to creating a law-abiding society in a frontier settlement. It is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in government. Claiborne County in East Tennessee was established October 29, 1801, created from sections of Hawkins and Grainger counties. Selected as the county seat in 1804, Tazewell is located near the center of the county. The county's first jail dated to 1804 and was used until 1819, when its replacement, the subject of this nomination, was constructed on the same site. This jail is one of the county's oldest extant buildings and symbolizes the social contract between public leaders and citizens. It is an early example of an extant jail in the region and represents the local government's efforts to maintain law and order. It was used actively as a jail until 1931 and still retains a high degree of integrity.

The area that became Claiborne County received a wave of westward pioneers beginning in the late eighteenth century, as migrating settlers passed through the Cumberland Gap, where Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee meet. Five years after the creation of the state of Tennessee, Claiborne County petitioned for charter. The county was named for William Charles Claiborne, an early Superior Court Judge and Congressman from Tennessee. At the first meeting of the Claiborne County Court, held at the home of John Owens on December 7, 1801, the oath of office was administered by Grainger County magistrates. Walter Evans, Sr., was named the first Claiborne County Clerk (1801-1816) and John Hunt, Sr., the first sheriff (1801-1804). The second term of the court was held at Hunt's home. Hunt's prominence is evident in the early settlement, as church services were also held at his home until a small church was built by merchant William Graham.⁴ (After his term as sheriff, John Hunt, Sr., migrated south and west, becoming the founder of Huntsville, Alabama.)

Tazewell was named as the Claiborne County seat in 1804. Apparently, during the county's first three years, Sheriff Hunt did not have occasion to detain any law-breakers; local historian Edgar A. Holt wrote that Hunt "pointed out an embarrassment to the performance of his duties – there was then no jail."⁵ Thus, in 1804, a crude structure was built south of the courthouse, another small, frame building erected the same year. Sheriff Hunt became the first jailor, and his son-in-law, Mr. Foreshea, was the first jail keeper.⁶ This first jail was used until 1819, when a more substantial stone and brick structure, the subject of this nomination, was built at the same location. The committee appointed to build the new jail included Josiah S. Ramsey, John Evans, Robert Crockett, William Renfro, William Graham, David Rogers, and Rueben Roger.⁷ To cite every reference to the construction of the Claiborne County jail would be an exercise in redundancy, though it is

⁴ Alexander Moore Cloud, "Old Time Tazewell," in *Reflections, Quarterly Newsletter* (Tazewell, TN: Claiborne County Historical Society, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1986), 9-10; "Goodspeed's History of Claiborne County," available at website accessed September 8, 2006, <http://www.tngenweb.org/claiborne/history.php>; Bonnie M. Page, *Claiborne County: Its Cities, Towns, and Points of Interest* (Clinton, TN: author, 1986), Part II, No. 1 (n.p.).

⁵ Edgar A. Holt, *Claiborne County* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1981), 11.

⁶ Hansard, 49; Page, Part I, No. 4 (n.p.).

⁷ Claiborne County Historical Society, *The People's History of Claiborne County, Tennessee* (Salem, WV: Walsworth Press, 1988), 10-11.

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Claiborne County, Tennessee

worth noting that the jail is mentioned repeatedly in local history, emphasizing its enduring symbolic significance and the importance of law enforcement to the citizens and government of the county.

According to early records of the Claiborne County Court, debt was one of the most common offenses. Debt, and other non-violent offenses, drew the punishment of lashing at the county whipping post, which was located between the jail and the courthouse and consisted of a yoke, similar to an oxen harness. The county jail contained a room, eighteen square feet in size, specifically for debtors; it was one of the units on the second floor. There, the sheriff held people who made no attempt to resolve their indebtedness. It was the sheriff's responsibility to take debtors, two at a time, from the jail to the post for whipping until they promised to find work that would pay off their debts. Crimes of assault and battery also appeared frequently; legal disputes between individuals were also common. Trespass, libel, and murder were rare charges. A more serious crime, such as horse theft, was punishable by branding ("H.T." on the thumb), practiced as late as 1822. The court frequently listened to cases of "bastardy," an offense, assumingly by a male, of fathering a child and refusing to support that child.⁸

The settlers of Claiborne County demonstrated an unusual attention to judicial and societal matters, even forming the Tazewell Animi-cultus Literary Society on January 1, 1825. This group pondered such philosophical and civic-minded questions as the construction of a state penitentiary, dueling, biblical justification (or lack thereof) of slavery, the two-party system of government, and public election versus court appointment of civil officers. At that time, the County Court elected civil officers. On January 25, 1836, a Claiborne County commission, appointed by both houses of the Tennessee General Assembly, divided the county into twelve voting districts. While the County Courthouse was the site for the Tazewell district, most election sites were assigned to a citizen's house within each district.⁹

John Hunt, Jr., assumed the post of County Sheriff from 1820 to 1836, before becoming County Clerk, 1836 to 1837. During Hunt's term as Sheriff, the county witnessed a few notable court cases. Goodspeed's history of the county notes that in October of 1822 Thomas Jones was convicted on two counts of manslaughter. Jones was to be branded on the thumb with the letter "M," but he received a pardon from the Governor. On a lighter note, Goodspeed recounts an April 1823 case in which Judge Scott called for a short recess during the trial of James C. Martin, convicted on grand larceny charges. Implying that the judge might have taken too long a break to indulge his "fondness for the "flowing bowl," Goodspeed relates that the judge returned to find an empty courtroom. Only the Sheriff remained, who informed the judge that during his absence, the accused had escaped and eluded pursuit. Seven years later, Claiborne County witnessed its first of two hangings on record. In 1830, an African-American male was found guilty of killing his mistress and was hanged for the crime. The hanging took place a short distance from the town, allowing room for public attendance. The man's bones were preserved at the local apothecary shop of Dr. Alfred Neal.¹⁰

⁸ Cloud, Vol. 4, No. 13, Hansard, 48-9, Holt, 11.

⁹ Cloud, Vol.4, No. 18; Page, Part I, No. 3 (n.p.).

¹⁰ Cloud, Vol. 4, No. 2, 9-10; "Goodspeed's History of Claiborne County," website; Hansard, 43.

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Claiborne County, Tennessee

During the period between from the 1830s to the Civil War, very little specific reference to the county jail exists other than that it was, of course, in use. Greater detail emerges on criminal information as permanent newspapers were established, towards the late nineteenth century. Also, as more sensational incidence of crime occurred, the need and use of the jail became more pronounced.

During the Civil War, Claiborne County was divided in sentiment, like many communities in the border states, though it leaned towards Union sympathies. Though no major military conflicts occurred within the county, Tazewell was for a time occupied by Confederate troops. On November 11, 1862, the Confederates evacuated the town; a devastating fire coincided with their departure, though no local history directly incriminates the troops for starting it. Nonetheless, the fire destroyed many buildings in the heart of the town, including the antebellum courthouse. Claiborne County was without a permanent courthouse for five years, at which time a new structure was completed.¹¹

After the war, hostilities in Claiborne County still flared, and assault charges rose, challenging law and order of the community. In 1874-1875, a most noteworthy crime and prosecution took place in Claiborne County: Ananias Honeycutt was convicted of the murder of Thomas Ausmus. Honeycutt was arrested a week after the murder in January of 1874 and was detained in the county jail; in August of 1875, he was to be hanged for the crime. Following his prosecution, Honeycutt defended himself through a ten-page printed 'confession' in which he recounted his version of the incident, claiming that had been framed for the murder. In the booklet, Honeycutt claimed that his brother-in-law, Henry Mayers, had privately confessed the crime to him and swore him to secrecy. However, since a couple of witnesses had seen Honeycutt with Ausmus on the morning of the murder, he was placed under arrest, whereupon the victim's family threatened him. Maintaining his innocence, Honeycutt stated that the son of the slain man threatened that if Honeycutt "did not implicate Henry Mayers with the murder of his father, he would fill [Honeycutt] with pine splinters and set [him] on fire." Honeycutt first claimed ignorance and then stated that his brother-in-law "was connected with the murder." Since Mayers was already being held in jail for the murder of Ausmus, perhaps Honeycutt's knowledge of his brother-in-law's guilt implicated him, as well. Honeycutt was chained and placed in jail, though he omits the fate of Mayers from his essay. He stated: "Since I have been lodged in the jail of this [Claiborne] county, I have often been visited by the relations and friends of the Ausmus family, trying to extort a confession from me." As witnesses, according to Honeycutt, perjured themselves in court, the evidence (probably considered circumstantial today) against him accumulated. Maintaining a clear conscience to the end, Honeycutt's final wish was that God take care of his wife and small child, and that his "friends, one and all, meet [him] in Heaven."¹²

The day of Honeycutt's hanging was a major social event for the citizens of Claiborne County. Families packed picnic lunches to attend the event. Between 5,000 and 6,000 people, approximately half the county's population at the time, were on hand. A procession of fifty guards accompanied Honeycutt and his coffin

¹¹ "Claiborne County, Tennessee," at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~pruittsintn/ciaibornecountytennessee.html> website accessed September 8, 2006.

¹² *Confession of Ananias Honeycutt, Sentenced to be Hung, Tazewell, Tennessee, August 13, 1875* (Morristown, TN: John ?, 1875), available at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~tnclai2/misc/001953.htm> website accessed September 1, 2006.

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from the jail to the site of the hanging, which took place in what was historically called “Academy Hollow,” near the Kentucky Road (today, the intersection of Clear Fork Road and Highway 25E, within walking distance from the jail). Reverend Billy Cruthfield preached for an hour, and a second preacher, Reverend Greer, spoke as well. Honeycutt was allowed some final words, asking the crowd to meet him in heaven, reinforcing his claim of innocence. His head was covered, and the wagon pulled out from under him. His family took him home to bury. This was the last hanging to take place in Claiborne County.¹³

The local newspaper *The Cumberland Spectator* reported “Penitentiary Statistics” from across the state, on January 1, 1872. Of 730 jailed convicts statewide at that time, the Claiborne County Jail counted six. This number was close to the jail’s capacity, given its cell space. Compared with other counties, this number was within an expected range for the Claiborne County 1870 population (9,321).¹⁴ The issue of state convict numbers continued to be a concern in the post-war South, as the convict labor system infringed on employment opportunities of free labor. The matter came to a dramatic head in the coal mines of East Tennessee, when free miners revolted against both convict labor and the state militia in the Coal Creek War of 1891-1892, close to Claiborne County, in Anderson County. In October of 1892, as the free miners were forced to surrender their position, *The Claiborne County Democrat* printed the story “To [sic] Many Convicts,” reporting claims from across the state of excessive punishment (e.g., a three-year sentence for stealing a loaf of bread). The story suggested that the number of convicts in Tennessee was disproportionate to the population, stating that the situation was “evidently a fungus growth covered by legislation in the interest of [supplying] penitentiary lessees.” Though the story did not refer to any county in particular, its inclusion in a Claiborne County newspaper can at least be inferred as an act of edification of the local constituency in an election year: “It is sincerely hoped that the next legislature will have the brains and courage enough to adopt radical reforms in a thorough revision of the criminal code.”¹⁵ (In fact, the voters elected a new governor that November, Peter Turney, who abolished the convict lease system.)

During the 1880s and 1890s, in Claiborne County crimes relating to weapons were mainly the crimes reported. An editorial in the *Cumberland Gap Progress* warned boys against carrying guns, and parents against giving guns as gifts to their sons. The admonition was qualified, however, as the writer’s opinion was that the county law against guns was a nuisance, as the court had to adjudicate in gun-carrying cases against otherwise law-abiding citizens. The writer offered that the law “does not prevent lawless or dangerous men from carrying pistols of the most improved pattern.”¹⁶ Just three weeks later the paper reported that an

¹³ “Claiborne County, Tennessee,” at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~pruittsintn/ciaibornecountytennessee.html> accessed September 8, 2006.

¹⁴ Claiborne County’s rate of conviction (per population) was .064%. Adjacent Campbell County had four convicts and a population of 7,445 (.054%); adjacent Union County had one convict for a population of 7605 (.014%); Further south, Knox County’s 28,990 population had 32 convicts (.11%); and Blount County’s population of 14,237 had 13 convicts (.091%). “Penitentiary Statistics,” *The Cumberland Spectator*, January 1, 1872, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center’s McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

¹⁵ “To [sic] Many Convicts,” *Claiborne County Democrat*, October 5, 1892, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center’s McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

¹⁶ “Carrying Pistols,” *Cumberland Gap Progress*, May 9, 1888, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center’s McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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inmate of the jail, Micah Rogers, convicted for the murder of a Mr. Golden, successfully escaped from his guard and eluded arrest when aided by others. Rogers escaped into the mountains, and the paper speculated that his accomplices would soon be charged with aiding and abetting.¹⁷

Recidivism rose towards the late nineteenth century in Claiborne County. For example, one Joe Messer became well acquainted with the confines of the Claiborne County Jail. Having been tried many times on unnamed, but presumably lesser crimes, Messer on occasion had hung juries, had been acquitted, and had been convicted. However, in October of 1888, he stepped up the level of his lawbreaking, committing a multiple-count crime when he fraudulently purchased a horse on installment using a note on his mother's property and then re-sold the horse to another man. When policeman Bart Carr brought him to jail, the *Cumberland Gap Progress* alluded to Messer's past success in evading serious prosecution, commenting, "We fear he is now in serious trouble."¹⁸

An incident between two squabbling neighbors, resulted in the shooting of Sheriff Hughes in November, 1888. An errant bullet shot through the Sheriff's hand, and his finger required amputation. The *Cumberland Gap Progress* did not report if either of the two men was charged.¹⁹ For the remainder of the century, Claiborne County was without major reported crimes, and local newspapers ran stories of violent crimes from elsewhere. In 1896, the *Tazewell Times* ran a front-page story of a hanging for murder in Sneedville, in neighboring Hancock County. Maired Hatfield, of the notorious Kentucky family, was executed in front of 5,000 people for the murder of Jonas Trail. As in the Honeycutt trial in Tazewell, the hanging was arranged to take place a short distance, one-half mile in this case, from the jail. The victim was said to have been a moonshiner, killed for his stash of money.²⁰

The *New Tazewell Times* reported a two-hundred dollar reward for the capture and delivery of William Wilson to the Sheriff at the Claiborne County jail in August, 1901. Wilson was wanted for the murder of Fielden Loop. No other details were given.²¹ Capturing and jailing murder suspects did not constitute the only work of Claiborne County sheriffs. During prohibition, illegal moonshining presented greater potential for criminal activity, and greater activity for the Sheriff and the jail. The *Claiborne Progress* reported that Sheriff Green was "after the booze gang." He conducted a raid on "cob houses" and confiscated evidence of operation, including jugs of whiskey and barrels of beer. Sentences for the crime of moonshining were not reported.²²

¹⁷ "The Re-Arrest of Rogers Successfully Resisted," *Cumberland Gap Progress*, May 30, 1888, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

¹⁸ *Cumberland Gap Progress*, October 24, 1888, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

¹⁹ "Dangerous Shooting," *Cumberland Gap Progress*, November 7, 1888, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²⁰ "Maired Hatfield," *Tazewell Times*, December 23, 1896, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²¹ "\$200 Reward," *The New Tazewell Times*, August 23, 1909, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²² *The Claiborne Progress*, March 14, 1923, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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In an unexpected turn of events, a murder trial in Claiborne County was halted when a juror slipped away from a guard. *The Claiborne Progress* was following what it called a sensational trial and reported on April 8, 1925 that the escape of a juror delayed court proceedings against Bailey Manning for the murder of his brother-in-law Dr. E.J. McDaniel. Manning was detained at the jail while the court was in recess, attempting to rectify the situation. The story covered the entire front page of the newspaper and most of a continuation page, detailing the convoluted proceedings of an intricate case. "Never in the history of Claiborne County has any trial held the unabated interest of the people as this case has." Two other murder cases were delayed from commencing trial, due to the length of the McDaniel proceedings, two weeks at the point of the juror's escape.²³

Perhaps the magnitude of the Manning trial was an appropriate finale in the significance of the historic Claiborne County Jail that housed the defendant, as well as for the Courthouse that hosted the trial. In 1931 the County lost its courthouse to a fire. A new courthouse was built and opened in 1932, complete with a new Sheriff's Department and County Jail facility. This modern jail was substantially larger, able to accommodate dozens of inmates, a necessity in terms of rising criminal offenses and in modern design. In 2006, a new Claiborne County Jail and Justice Center was opened, and nearly fifty prisoners moved from the 1932 facility.

According to the Claiborne County Historical Society, the 1819 jail was the only jail in the county, at least during the nineteenth century. It was used not only by Tazewell, but also by surrounding cities, Harrogate, Cumberland Gap, and others to house their prisoners. The jail was a constant architectural symbol of government and law for its citizens, especially given a five-year absence of the Claiborne County Courthouse from 1862 to 1867. As one of the oldest extant buildings in the county, and certainly the oldest remaining public structure, the 1819 Claiborne County Jail, built on the site of the first 1804 jail, represents its county's history of local law enforcement from its settlement period.

²³ "Sensational Turn in the Manning-McDaniel Trial," *The Claiborne Progress*, April 8, 1925, available on microfilm at the East Tennessee History Center's McClung Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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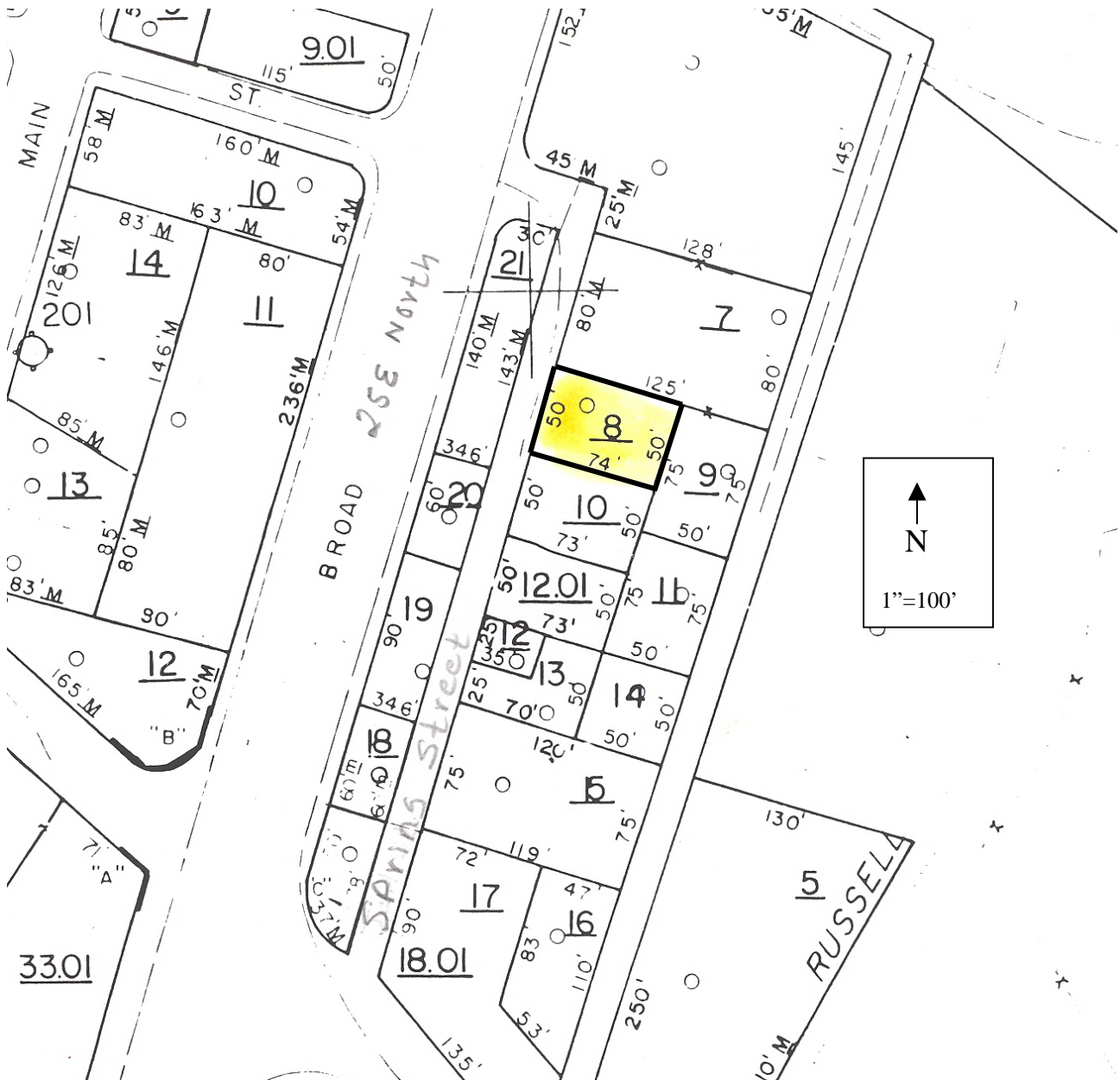
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Claiborne County Jail
Claiborne County, Tennessee

Verbal Boundary Description

The Claiborne County Jail is located on the east side of Hwy 33; the side street next to the property is Spring Street. The jail sits on a lot whose measurements exceed that of the building by two feet from each elevation. The property is listed in the Claiborne County Tax Assessor's office as on Map 096A, Group C, Parcel 008.00.



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Claiborne County Jail
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Claiborne County Jail

Hwy. 33 near intersection of Hwy. 25, Claiborne County, Tazewell, TN

Photos by Andra Kowalczyk

Date: August, 2006

- 1/17 North elevation and west façade, photographer facing southeast.
- 2/17 North elevation, photographer facing south.
- 3/17 South elevation, photographer facing northeast.
- 4/17 West façade, photographer facing east.
- 5/17 Close up of west façade, upper level, photographer facing east.
- 6/17 Entrance, west façade, photographer facing east.
- 7/17 Looking through doorway to back room, ground level, photographer facing east.
- 8/17 Rear 2/3 of ground level, concrete floor shows original central hall, photographer facing east.
- 9/17 Close up of window with metal grate cover, ground level
- 10/17 Close up of limestone wall, ground level, with etched graffiti
- 11/17 Stairway to upper floor, on south wall, photographer facing south.
- 12/17 Window above stairway, on upper level, south wall, photographer facing south.
- 13/17 Bathroom partitions (added c. 1982) on upper level, north wall, photographer facing north.
- 14/17 Upper level, looking through doorway to back (east) wall, photographer facing east.
- 15/17 Brick chimney, photographer facing east.
- 16/17 Upper level, back corner shows wood siding on back wall and metal bolts on brick wall,
photographer
facing northeast.
- 17/17 East gable vent, photogrpaher facing east.